

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO USIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL MUNICH

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FOR IBS, IEU; BELGRADE FOR FREUND; MUNICH FOR CARP

E.O. 11652: NA

SUBJECT: FACILITATIVE SERVICES FOR VOA CORRESPONDENT

REF: A. USIA 23501 B. SOFIA 2068

1. SUMMARY: "TELERIMPEX" HAS ADVISED RECIPROCITY NOT RPT RPT NOT POSSIBLE, ALSO ASSERTS CHARGES FOR SERVICES TO PLANINSKY ARE JUSTIFIED AND LEGALLY NOT CHANGEABLE. WE REGRETFULLY SEE LITTLE OPTION FOR VOA BUT TO PAY.

2. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FROM "TELERIMPEX" LETTER PROVIDING REQUESTED CLARIFICATION OF \$3,500 CHARGES FOR SERVICES TO VOA BULGARIAN SERVICE CHIEF BOYAN PLANINSKY DURING HIS SEPTEMBER STAY IN BULGARIA. "TELERIMPEX" LETTER WAS SENT FOLLOWING MEETING BETWEEN P&C OFFICER, "TELERIMPEX" ACTING CHIEF IVAN IVANOV AND GEORGI KHRISTOV, COMMITTEE FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO CHIEF OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. LETTER MAKES THESE POINTS:

A. PLANINSKY WAS PROVIDED STUDIO, EQUIPMENT AND STAFF FOR EIGHT DAYS EACH IN SOFIA AND PLOVDIV. DURING "FEED" PERIODS, "STUDIO, EQUIPMENT AND STAFF HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY AT HIS DISPOSAL AND HAVE SERVED ONLY HIM."

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(KHRISTOV SAID SOFIA STUDIO WAS USED BY NO ONE ELSE,

AND TWO TECHNICIANS WERE ESPECIALLY PROVIDED FOR IT.)

B. STUDIO STAFF WORKED WEEKENDS AND BULGARIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAYS. (ONLY WEEKEND DATE WAS SAT 6 SEPT; HOLIDAY WAS TUES-WED 9-10 SEPT.)

C. BULGARIAN RADIO DOES "NOT FORESEE USING SERVICES OF VOICE OF AMERICA IN NEAR FUTURE, (SO) WE ARE NOT IN POSITION TO ACCEPT YOUR PROPOSAL FOR RECIPROCITY." (KHRISTOV SAID RECIPROCITY DOES NOT MEAN WITHOUT PAYMENT. KHRISTOV ALSO SAID BULGARIAN RADIO HAD NO U.S. CORRESPONDENTS; P&C OFFICER NOTED "RABOTNICHESKO DELO" CORRESPONDENT IN WASHINGTON AND BULGARIAN TELEGRAPH AGENCY IN NEW YORK TELEPHONE REPORTS TO BULGARIA RADIO.)

D. VOA SHOULD "BE SO KIND TO REMIT DUE AMOUNT IF POSSIBLE IN NOVEMBER."

3. IN CONVERSATION KHRISTOV ALSO SAID VOA COULD HAVE CANCELLED FEEDS AFTER HE TOLD PLANINSKY AND P&C OFFICER ON FRI 5 SEPT THERE WOULD BE CHARGES; P&C OFFICER NOTED THERE WAS NO INDICATION THEN AMOUNT WOULD BE MORE THAN NOMINAL. IVANOV SAID FEEDS COULD HAVE BEEN CANCELLED AFTER SUN 7 SEPT, DATE OF HIS LETTER STATING AMOUNT OF CHARGES. (WE BELIEVE LETTER WAS RECEIVED AT EARLIEST THURS 11 SEPT, FOLLOWING HOLIDAY.)

4. IVANOV ASSERTED CHARGES ACCORD WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE, SAYING ORTF RECENTLY CHARGED BULGARIANS \$2,000 FOR 1 1/2-HOUR FEED FROM PARIS. CHARGES ALSO WERE SET ACCORDING TO BULGARIAN "TARIFF"; HE REFUSED TO GIVE P&C OFFICER COPY. IVANOV SAID RADIO SOFIA AND RADIO PLOVDIV HAD BEEN ADVISED OF AMOUNTS INVOLVED AND IMPLIED FUNDS HAVE ALREADY BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM COMMITTEE; CHARGES LEGALLY CAN THEREFORE NOT BE REDUCED.

5. WHEN P&C OFFICER ATTEMPTED NOTE TYPICAL 30-DOLLAR CHARGE IN U.S. AS PRELUDE TO OFFERING COMPROMISE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAYMENT (REF A, PARA 2), KHRISTOV DISMISSED U.S. DOMESTIC PRACTICES AS IRRELEVANT.

6. COMMENT: A. EACH POINT IN PARAS 2, 3, 4 ABOVE CAN BE DEBATED AND EVEN (IN OUR MINDS, AT LEAST) REFUTED. ONLY RESULT WOULD BE WORSENING OF EMBASSY-COMMITTEE RELATIONS, EFFECTIVELY ENDING POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATION, E.G., IN PLACING U.S. MATERIALS ON

BULGARIAN TELEVISION, WHICH MAY HAVE GREATER NEED FOR THEM NOW WITH SECOND CHANNEL BROADCASTING REGULARLY.

B. WE BELIEVED (AND BELIEVE) IT WAS CLEAR PLANINSKY'S FEEDS WOULD BE ON RECIPROCAL, NO-CHARGE BASIS. BULGARIANS MAY HAVE "MOUSE-TRAPPED" US BY NOT PROVIDING WRITTEN REPLY TO OUR WRITTEN REQUEST FOR SERVICES AND OFFER OF RECIPROCITY, AND BY IVANOV'S ABSENCE AT PLANINSKY'S INITIAL MEETING WITH KHRISTOV IN AUGUST. BUT, QUOTING BULGARIAN PROVERB, "FRIENDSHIP IS FRIENDSHIP, BUT CHEESE COSTS MONEY."

C. WE FORESEE NO SIGNIFICANT PROBABILITY THAT EVENTS WILL COINCIDE IN FUTURE AS THEY DID DURING SEPTEMBER TO AGAIN WARRANT PRESENCE OF VOA CORRESPONDENT FOR TELEPHONE FEEDS OVER EXTENDED PERIOD. ANY VOA CORRESPONDENT WHO VISITS BULGARIA IN FUTURE CAN TELEX REPORTS OR DELAY THEM UNTIL RETURN TO HIS BASE (E.G., BELGRADE OR MUNICH).

7. RECOMMENDATION: WE SEE NO ALTERNATIVE. PLEASE PROVIDE FISCAL DATA FOR \$3,500.
FELDMAN

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